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SUBJECT: ESTONIA STANDS UP FOR GEORGIA

Classified By: DCM Jeff Goldstein for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) According to Simmu Tiik, MFA Director General for Russia, on October 20, during the dinner with EU leaders in Finland, Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip asked President Putin if Russia could be a "trusted partner" to supply energy to Europe "in light of its behavior in Georgia." PM Ansip also questioned recent statements from Moscow which allege that Georgia wants to escalate the situation. Tikk said that while Putin's comments at the dinner were for "general consumption", he made a point of responding to Ansip, saying that "he knows the Government of Georgia wants war and that if the EU wants to lower the tension, it needs to speak with the Georgians and not him."

¶2. (SBU) Foreign Minister Urmas Paet has also been vocal on Georgia. On October 17 at the EU's Foreign Ministers' Council, FM Paet said, "Russia must stop the blockade as well as all kinds of activity with respect to Georgia that incite tension including the repression of Georgians in Russia." FM Paet also called on the EU to step up and be ready to support Georgia financially if Russia continued its crippling economic sanctions.

¶3. (SBU) On October 17, the Estonian Parliament overwhelmingly passed a statement expressing support for Georgia and condemning Russia's behavior. Andres Herkel, a MP and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, assured us that Estonia takes its role as an advocate for Georgia very seriously. He said, "We still remember when Estonia was in a similar position ten to fifteen years ago and needed any support it could get from its friends." The near unanimous (one vote against) vote in favor of the declaration demonstrates strong cross-party support. Ain Seppik, another MP, acknowledged to us that he knows the Parliament's statement will have limited impact on resolving the situation, but said MPs felt it important nonetheless "to show support and solidarity with the Georgian people."

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